

Meeting Minutes

RED ROCK DESERT LEARNING CENTER CORE GROUP Bureau of Land Management Interagency Office Tuesday, November 16, 2004

The meeting commenced at 8:35 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Loretta Asay, Kathy August, Kim Blanc, Bob Boyd, David Bullado, Paul Buck, Bill Cates, Bob Clements, Beth Domowicz, Nancy Flagg, David Frommer, Laurie Howard, Megan Iudice, Jeanne Klockow, Angie Lara, Richard Leifreid, Sara Mills, Helen Mortenson, Tim O'Brien, Alan O'Neill, Mary Peterson, Michael Reiland, Kevin Stewart, Henry Tom, Pamela Vilkin, Les Wallach, Debbie Wright, Billie Young.

1. Introductions

The group welcomed Sara Mills and Beth Domowicz to the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 19, 2004, meeting were approved with no changes.

3. Science Curriculum

Dr. Paul Buck, chair of the Educational Programs Committee, requested that his report be postponed to the next meeting.

4. Advisory Board Structure

Michael Reiland asked for a general discussion on ideas for a school advisory board and presented several options for consideration. One model is to set up a committee similar in structure to the current Resource Advisory Council (RAC), whose members are nominated to advise BLM on certain subjects. The downside of this option is that a formal charter is required, persons nominated to serve must be approved by the Secretary of the Interior, and all meetings have to be noticed in the Federal Register. A subset of this model would be to use the existing Southern Mojave Great Basin Resource Advisory Council, or a subgroup of the Council, as the school advisory board.

Another option is to create a committee of local citizens to make recommendations to the BLM. The downside is that such a committee would carry no real weight within the BLM organizational structure.

Alan O'Neill commented that most outdoor schools have their own board independent of the BLM; there is a relationship with the managing agency but there is also a separation. He felt the mission of the existing RAC is too general. The Red Rock Desert Learning Center needs a board that is familiar with how to operate this kind of center. Also, the operator might establish its own board. Michael agreed that most operators will establish a board. What is under discussion is whether there should be a more public board that has nothing to do with the operator or the BLM, which would give the public an opportunity to provide comments on the school's management and operation in either a formal or informal manner.

Paul Buck noted there will be a cooperative agreement between the operator and the BLM, which he presumes will contain clauses that allow the BLM to have oversight of the school. Michael agreed and said the agreement would also allow the operator to develop its own method of oversight. Both are different levels of oversight, but concern has been expressed about public

input into the school. Paul stated the members of the core group are the best people to provide oversight. Paul saw no difference between the RAC and a community group, in that both are advisory. Michael noted, however, that one is official and one isn't. Billie Young said there some difference between the two models. The RAC affords specific seats to maintain balance to ensure an evenness in its approach and awareness. While the BLM can advertise openings on the Council, people must be nominated and approved by the Secretary. Paul asked who identifies the representatives for the RAC? Michael said the charter establishes those details. Paul doesn't want the core group to lose control. David Frommer asked if there is any mechanism in the coop agreement to mandate an advisory board? Michael replied there is some possibility to do this, even to dictate the kind of representative community groups desired on the board. The only issue is that this model still attaches the board to the operator, which might not exist with one of the other options. Alan agreed that the core group would be the logical constituency to make up this board. Michael reminded that no matter what model, BLM still cannot dictate who the actual members would be. At best, it would be nominations. David clarified that the BLM could designate organizations and people who represent different interests. Michael agreed that there would be some leeway but he would have to check how much. David advocated requiring a board in the agreement with some recommended structure, making clear that it is advisory but perhaps spelling out its mission.

Helen Mortenson noted that two key people (Jackson Ramsey and Blaine Benedict) weren't at the meeting to participate in this discussion, so she hoped this was just an initial discussion. Michael said he had talked to both of them, knowing they couldn't be here today.

5. Cultural Survey

Michael Reiland handed out a one-page summary of the cultural survey conducted as part of the Environmental Assessment (EA) process. The summary described what was found on the Oliver Ranch property without identifying locations. The report does not appear to indicate any findings that cannot be mitigated. However, Michael cautioned that the EA process will actually determine what needs to be done with these findings.

Paul Buck noted that even if mitigation occurs, 7000 students annually creates an adverse situation regardless. He suggested doing data recovery prior to the school being built and asked if the architect will have the locations plotted on the site map. Michael said the sites are confidential, but as the EA goes along, the findings will be part of the design process. Paul said the architects need to know where to put the trails. Michael said a team plans to map the trails on Nov. 29-30 (*NOTE: the trail mapping was subsequently postponed to an as-yet undetermined future date.*)

5. Update from Line & Space Architects

Henry Tom and Les Wallach of Line and Space Architects provided an update on recent activities (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Initiative office and BLM office*). Henry handed out copies of the most recent Building Committee report. Schematic design is moving along quickly and is approximately 90 percent complete to date. Dec. 9 is the completion date for schematic design and the architects will make a presentation to the Building Committee on that date. The design will be reviewed by BLM and undergo a value analysis between Dec. 13 and Jan. 31. Design development is slated to begin February 1.

Les then made a presentation on the site plan progress. He reminded the group that the general protocol is that the architects first present to the Building Committee before coming to the core group. The only building on the site that has been reviewed by the committee is the student housing. There are approximately 6 buildings or parts of buildings that will be shown today to the Building Committee; those will then be presented to the core group at its January meeting.

Les showed the group an aerial view of the property, with circulation paths, trails, and facilities indicated in color blocks. The school facilities are almost universally located on a north-south orientation. Everything is keyed to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. On the aerial view, Les described how students arrive by bus at a shade structure, then go to a friendship circle where they pick up carts for their belongings. The friendship circle can handle the entire capacity of the school – 140 people. It will also be a good place for other community events, as deemed appropriate. The student flex labs are out in the flood plain but have been sited well above the federal requirements. There are two main service buildings – a central plant and maintenance building – that will be bermed to reduce visibility from the road. The general palette of materials will be keyed to either sandstone or stone from the site. If the budget won't allow sandstone, the fallback position is some kind of split-face stone. Staff enter on the service road and their parking is near the service buildings. The original ranch buildings can be used as learning venues.

The student dormitories are set up to be passive machines and are almost fully buried on one side. Each dorm is approximately 4,000-5,000 square feet. Students will have an opportunity to control their environment and take responsibility for the temperature in the dorms. Students enter into a central gathering place, with split sleeping quarters for boys and girls on each end of the building. The sleeping quarters have loft spaces in which students will use sleeping bags on mats, with the lofts built as high as traditional bunk beds. There is also a flex room for ADA kids with traditional beds and a bathroom. Bathrooms are located below the loft rooms, down a set of steps. There are two showers/two toilets for each group of 8 kids. Additional bathrooms are located in the flex room and in chaperone area. Toilets will be flushed with recycled water. Showers will be measurable – students will be able to see the water in the reservoir.

Kim Blanc asked about the lofts and whether there is any separation between the mats; she noted health and safety regulations regarding space between beds. She offered to provide Les with information on these standards. Pam Vilkin asked about outdoor space at the dorms. Les said there is a deck outside the central gathering space.

Helen Mortenson asked about central facilities for communications. Les said this has not been talked about this much but a communications overlay will be added to the design later. He indicated there will probably be a fair amount of wireless connectivity. Helen noted the need to export curriculum to other schools around the nation. Les said the architects are allocating space for that, but nothing else has yet been determined.

Finally, Les said the notes from the Resource Conservation Workshop held in Tucson last month will be sent for uploading to the RRDLC website.

6. Discussion of Student Risk Analysis/Liability Issues

Michael Reiland said that issues related to student risk and liability were discussed at the Design Oversight Committee held the night prior. In particular, there are been concerns expressed about siting the flex labs in the flood plain and whether sufficient investigation of this has been done. This issues will be taken up by the Building Committee, but he asked if the core group had any other issues it wished to raise. Paul Buck said he assumed the operator will assume liability for the site. Michael said yes and no. The operator will have to indemnify the U.S. government. Loretta Asay reiterated that the Clark County School District assumes no liability. Parents will sign a waiver. Loretta noted that good evacuation plans and contingencies for students with medical needs will be needed. Kim Blanc emphasized the need for a communication plan; every instructor should be provided a source of communication, like a walkie-talkie. Loretta noted privacy concerns with adequately separating students and adults.

David Frommer said Line and Space has to make some operational assumptions to do its work. There must be some kind of narrative about the 4-day stay and what happens as students enter to the property – based on curriculum and based on design – so that design decisions are tied to operations’ strategies. He felt an emergency management plan – some kind of outline of what that is – is important to have now. It will help expose where the conflicts will happen to help make decisions about the facilities. Paul Buck said the Educational Curriculum Committee has done a rough outline so that the architects know where things need to go, but he had figured on another year to flesh out the curriculum program. David reiterated that, ideally, it would be good to have the narrative before design is completed.

Alan O’Neill said lightning strikes may need to be a consideration. Loretta said that should be part of the emergency management plan. Michael agreed and said, operationally, there may have to be rules that you don’t go to a particular area during a thunderstorm watch, for example.

7. Standing Reports

A. *UNLV*

Nancy Flagg provided an update on UNLV’s activities related to the project. The university is working on several Round 6 SNPLMA proposals, including an assessment plan for Education in the Environment initiatives. This proposal will help the agencies demonstrate and verify the benefits of outdoor education to the general public in southern Nevada

B. *BLM*

Michael Reiland invited core group members to attend programming sessions for the Red Rock Visitor Center during the week of December 13th. All meetings will be held at the interagency facility, and a schedule will be sent to everyone on the core group.

8. Committee Reports

A. *Building Committee*

Angie Lara provided a report on the Building Committee’s activities. There is nothing new to report beyond Les Wallach’s previous presentation. The committee meets today to go over designs on the rest of the buildings.

B. *Design Oversight Committee*

David Frommer reported on the meeting held last night. He plans to use his committee meetings as an open forum on the design, since the Building Committee meetings are not open to non-members. This should allow broader input into design issues and concerns. The Design Oversight Committee normally is held the night before the core group at 4pm. Michael Reiland said this is a good opportunity for people who can’t attend a core group meeting yet want to stay informed.

9. New Business

There will be no December core group meeting. The January core group meeting will be held Tuesday, January 18, 10:30 a.m., at the UNLV Paradise Campus.

Jeanne Klockow handed out results of the exercise at the last meeting to prioritize topics for the core curriculum. She will be forming working groups to develop a broad framework for the core curriculum over the next six months, and she provided a sign-up sheet for anyone interested in participating.

Pam Vilkin noted she has boxes of historical information on the development of the school. Michael Reiland encouraged her to provide it to him for the archives.

Angie Lara asked Michael to discuss the official role between UNLV and BLM. All curricular activities now need to go through Jeanne Klockow. Similarly, Mary Peterson is handling public outreach. Angie noted it is critical for Jeanne to be involved in any curricular activities, and she requested that anything of this nature be forwarded through Jeanne.

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.